



A Housing Strategy for Halton

2013 to 2018

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Foreword

Halton's Draft Housing Strategy 2013-18 has been prepared following a time of rapid change for all forms of housing.

The draft strategy seeks to take account of the changed economic climate, reduced public investment and legislative challenges such as Welfare Reform, the Localism Bill and changes to planning law.

Some of the housing issues in Halton include:

- Securing investment to build new homes or improve existing ones.
- Rebalancing the housing market to meet people's needs and aspirations.
- An ageing population.

To address the issues we face, we will need to continue to prioritise and innovate. The new strategy has to encourage growth if we are to realise the vision for housing in Halton.

We would welcome your comments on the strategy outlined in this document and the supporting evidence paper.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Phil Harris

Executive Board Member for Housing Strategy.



Previous Strategy's achievements

Halton's previous Housing Strategy (2008-2011) pre-dated the economic downturn and subsequent housing market decline. It achieved and exceeded many of the targets set for it, including:

- Successful delivery of phase 2 of the Castlefields regeneration programme, this has so far resulted in £30 million of new development replacing the last deck access dwellings remaining in the Northwest;
- Development of an additional 256 new affordable homes bringing approximately £30 million of external investment into the Borough. This includes the development of an additional extra care scheme in Halton. The outcome of further pending investment bids to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) are due to be reported by February, 2013;
- Since the Bond Guarantee System was introduced in 2009, 67% are ongoing, 15% ended without a claim and 18% ended with the bond being claimed;
- Crisis intervention support in the form of emergency support over the last three years has helped prevent homelessness for over 600 families;
- Clearance of all backlogs in adaptations in 200 socially rented homes;
- Development and implementation of a new Homelessness Strategy with increased emphasis on prevention which has drastically reduced levels of statutory homelessness to an all-time low;
- Since January 2010, the Housing Solutions dedicated Mortgage Rescue Adviser has provided advice to 187 households and as a result 94 cases were prevented from repossession;
- Halton Housing Trust delivered on its commitment to bring all former council housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard 12 months ahead of the Government's 2010 target date. Since that time the Trust has developed a comprehensive neighbourhood investment programme which will see £262 million investment in the former Council stock between 2009 and 2015 and has built its first new affordable homes in the Borough.

Context

Halton's Housing Strategy has been developed in the context of a wide range of national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans as summarised in the diagram below. Further details of how these influence the Strategy can be found in the Housing Strategy evidence paper.



In particular, it is expected that the following could have a major impact upon the deliverability of the Strategy:

- Welfare Reform Act 2012 - it is estimated that 1 in 5 social housing tenants will be affected by the underoccupancy penalty. Taken together with other reforms such as direct payments, the benefits cap and localisation of Council Tax benefits it is highly probable that rent arrears will increase. This will have a knock on effect on the ability of Registered Providers to attract finance for new housebuilding at competitive rates as well as impacting upon levels of homelessness.
- Affordable Housing Programme - The programme will subsidise social housing development until 2015 when the current programme comes to an end. It is unclear at this stage whether grant subsidy will be available to help fund affordable housing schemes post 2015. If, as suspected, direct grant subsidy comes to an end delivery of affordable housing post 2015 is likely to pose a considerable challenge for Registered Providers, particularly in light of welfare reforms and direct benefits payments which, as highlighted above, are likely to adversely impact on Providers revenue streams and consequently their ability to attract affordable private finance.

For this reason it is vital that the Strategy is closely monitored and reviewed as necessary. Regular monitoring will be undertaken via a report to the Halton Housing Partnership and Environment Policy and Performance Board every twelve months. Should a need for major changes to the Strategy be identified this will be the subject of public and stakeholder consultation.

Housing services play a cross cutting role in meeting Halton's priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, as demonstrated in the table below.

A Healthy Halton

- Improving housing conditions and energy efficiency
- Maintaining independence through adapting property

Employment, learning and skills in Halton

- Introducing new technologies in energy efficiency projects
- Apprenticeships and local labour in housing contracts

A Safer Halton

- Removing category 1 hazards within the home
- Tackling neighbourhood level anti social behaviour

Children and Young People in Halton

- Reducing overcrowding
- Preventing homelessness

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

- Promoting sustainable and mixed tenure neighbourhoods
- Acting as a driver for investment within Regeneration areas

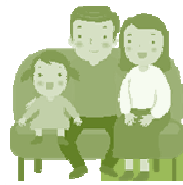
Housing issues

The key housing issues which influence this Strategy are examined in detail in the Housing Strategy evidence paper. They can be summarised under three main themes as illustrated below. These themes have influenced the development of our three overarching strategic objectives and the priorities within each of these, as described in more detail in the next section.



Housing market

- Growing affordability problems
- Reduced access to mortgage availability
- Growing private rented sector



People

- Ageing population
- Predicted growth in population
- Smaller household size
- Increasing levels of homelessness



Housing stock

- Poorest conditions in private rented sector
- Fuel poverty increasing
- Sizeable proportion of underoccupation in social rented stock

Our vision, objectives and priorities

Our vision for housing in Halton

Halton offers a broad range of good quality housing which meets the needs of existing communities, helps attract new residents to the Borough and contributes to the creation of sustainable communities.

To help achieve the vision, we have adopted three strategic objectives each containing a set of priorities as detailed below. The Strategy goes on to explain why each of the priorities has been selected, what we hope to achieve and how we plan to achieve it.

Strategic objective 1:

To plan for and facilitate housing growth and support economic growth

- Priority 1A: To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers
- Priority 1B: To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan

Strategic objective 2:

To meet the housing and support needs of Halton's communities and promote choice

- Priority 2A: To increase the supply of housing for older people and vulnerable people
- Priority 2B: To review future Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision
- Priority 2C: To prevent homelessness
- Priority 2D: To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice
- Priority 2E: To target access to supported housing to those who need it most

Strategic objective 3:

To improve housing conditions and make the best use of the housing stock

- Priority 3A: To complete the regeneration of Castlefields estate
- Priority 3B: To explore the implications of private rented sector growth with a view to improving standards in the sector
- Priority 3C: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty
- Priority 3D: To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock
- Priority 3E: To work with the Director of Public Health to achieve joint health and housing ambitions

Priority 1A: To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated population and household growth • Need to encourage immigration to support economic development projects • Core Strategy target of an average of 552 additional homes per annum • Level of need identified in Strategic Housing Market Assessment and as set out in evidence paper • Need for smaller sized affordable dwellings in light of underoccupancy penalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of 552 additional homes built per annum • A realistic target of 100 additional net affordable homes per annum • Rebalance social housing stock in terms of bedroom size in light of welfare reforms and as suggested by Strategic Housing Market Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Core Strategy • Identification of development sites through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment • Update Site Allocations Supplementary Planning Document • Implementation of Affordable Housing Policy • Partnership working and support in securing funding • Interventions and use of local authority powers where necessary to help bring forward sites for new housing • Encourage developers to provide affordable housing of a size suggested by the SHMAA

Priority 1B: To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to achieve economies of scale and consistency of approach • Effective targeting to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet targets in Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in LCR structure and programmes

areas most in need		
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Priority 2A: To increase the supply of housing for older people and vulnerable people		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% projected population growth in people aged 65 and over between 2008 and 2023 • Need for older people to maintain independence • Need for more adapted and adaptable housing • Shortage of suitable housing for other groups needing specialist provision e.g. Adults with Learning Difficulties, people with Physical and Sensory Disabilities • Need to rebalance temporary accommodation for young, single people so that there is provision on both sides of the Borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise number of extra care units over the Strategy period (minimum of 100 by 2015) • Increase in the number of wheelchair accessible dwellings and homes built to Lifetime Homes Standard • Provide supported housing in Widnes for the single homeless in Widnes. • Provide additional accommodation for adults with learning difficulties and physical disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify suitable sites for older persons housing and provide support for funding bids • Implement aspiration in Design of New Residential SPD for new developments of 10 dwellings or more to provide 10% wheelchair standard dwellings • Encourage development of homes that meet Lifetime Homes standard in line with the Core Strategy • Commission supported housing for single homeless people in Widnes • Commission 10 bungalows for adults with physical and learning difficulties • Partnership working and support to developers in securing funding

Priority 2B: To review future Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Planning Policy Framework places a duty on local authorities to identify sites for five years worth of Gypsy and Traveller provision • Under the Housing Act 2004 local authorities are expected to periodically assess the need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation in their area • Last assessment was completed in 2007 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date assessment of need • Identify sufficient site provision to meet assessed need for next five years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in Cheshire wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment • Incorporate Gypsy and Traveller provision in development of Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Priority 2C: To prevent homelessness

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to minimise impacts of Welfare Reform Act 2012 • To avoid social impacts of homelessness • To reduce the cost and impact of placing families in temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To at least reduce levels of statutory homelessness to 2010/11 levels (78 presentations, 37 of which owed the full statutory duty) over the Strategy period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake strategic review of homelessness • Update Homelessness Strategy • Engage with stakeholders and partners via the Homelessness Forum to minimise the impact of Welfare Reform Act 2012

Priority 2D: To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve transparency of the allocations system • To improve neighbourhood sustainability • Due to difficulties getting a foot on the housing ladder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fair and transparent allocations system that promotes choice • Increase the range and awareness of intermediate housing products to assist more first time buyers access the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and develop sub regional Choice Based Lettings system • Implement the Affordable Housing Policy which includes a proportion of intermediate housing • Develop a Marketing Strategy to promote the various forms of home ownership available • Promote Home Hub through the Council's website

Priority 2E: To target access to supported housing to those who need it most

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to ensure value for money in housing support services • Scrutiny of supported accommodation suggests that some residents may not need support services offered • Need to ensure fair access to accommodation based support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality and fitness for purpose of temporary accommodation for single, homeless people • Supported housing is offered to those in greatest need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfigure existing provision of housing for single homeless people • Improve accommodation for people fleeing Domestic Violence • Introduce a Housing Support Gateway system and undertake effective monitoring of the system

Priority 3A: To complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build on success of 10 year Masterplan • Continue the momentum of delivery of new mixed tenure homes • Some deck access flats remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of at least 350 new (predominantly private) homes by 2023 • Provision of a further 150 new affordable homes by 2015/16 (included within targets above) • Physical enhancement and energy efficiency improvements to 500 retained two storey system built homes by 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of action plan for next 10 years • Neighbourhood extension of Lakeside and Canalside • Continue to take strategic leadership role within the Castlefields Regeneration Partnership

Priority 3B: To explore the implications of private rented sector growth with a view to improving standards in the sector

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced mortgage availability • Reduced availability of social housing • Conditions in private rented sector generally worse • New power to discharge statutory homelessness duty through an offer of private rented accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of accredited landlords from 39 to 50 by end of Strategy period • Increase the number of accredited properties from 141 to 200 by end of Strategy period • Policy position on use of PRS to discharge statutory homelessness duty agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Private Rented Sector project plan • Consider implementing new flexibilities to discharge statutory homelessness duty through private rented sector (including carrying out suitability assessment)

Priority 3C: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on health • Fuel poverty increasing • Positive impact on climate change • Need to maximise household incomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve SAP ratings in private sector stock • Minimise levels of fuel poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued development of Healthy Homes Network • Develop new Affordable Warmth Strategy • Promoting a neighbourhood approach to implementation of Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation • Develop and implement HECA further report and progress reports

Priority 3D: To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of welfare reform • Impact of empty homes • Potential to maximise New Homes Bonus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the opportunities for underoccupying social tenants to find accommodation best suited to their needs • Bring 25 long term empty homes back into use over the Strategy period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support RPs in their implementation of the National Homeswap schemes • Review the Halton Tenancy Strategy • Work with RPs to identify empty properties suitable for lease/acquisition using HCA empty homes funding • Undertake survey of owners of empty homes to establish what support can be provided

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more proactive approach to bringing empty homes back into use
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Priority 3E: To work with the Director of Public Health to achieve joint health and housing ambitions		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant health inequalities in social housing and private rented stock • Good quality housing is a wider determinant in four of the five health priorities (cancer, mental health, falls prevention and child development) • Opportunity to maximise integrated working presented by Public Health becoming responsibility of Local Authority • Potential to reduce impact of welfare reform through promotion of healthy lifestyles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for joint working tackling issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fuel poverty (see Priority 3C); ➤ Falls prevention; ➤ Prompt hospital discharge; ➤ Promoting healthy lifestyles; • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish sub group of Housing Partnership to explore opportunities • Develop an action plan for joint working and adopting principles of Making Every Contact Count

Housing Strategy for Halton 2013 to 2018: Action Plan

Objective 1: To plan for and facilitate housing growth and support economic growth					
Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers	Implement Core Strategy	From 2013	HBC Planning Department	Staff time	Average of 552 additional homes built per annum
	Update Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment annually	Annual assessment	HBC Planning Department	Staff time	
	Update Site Allocations Supplementary Planning Document	2014/15	HBC Planning Department	Staff time	
	Implement Affordable Housing Policy	2013 onwards	HBC Planning and Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Average of 100 additional affordable homes built per annum
	Support Registered Providers in securing funding for the delivery of the Affordable Housing Programme	As and when support required	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time HCA resources	25% of new developed built as affordable housing subject to site viability assessments
	Encourage developers to provide affordable housing of a size recommended by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment	As and when required	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Reduction in the number of people affected by the Underoccupancy Penalty
To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan	Participate in and support sub regional projects originating from LCR Housing and Spatial Planning Group	As and when required	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Meet targets in Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan

Objective 2: To meet the housing and support needs of Halton's communities and promote choice

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To increase the supply of housing for older people and vulnerable people	Increase the supply of housing for older people through identification of sites, supporting Registered Provider funding bids and procure support and care services	Throughout period of the Strategy	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	HCA funding (capital) Revenue implications for housing support and care services (amount dependent on bids)	At least 100 units of additional older persons housing over the Strategy period
	Implement aspiration in Design for New Residential SPD for new developments of 10 dwellings or more to provide 10% wheelchair standard dwellings	As and when planning applications received	HBC Planning	Staff time	Aspirational target of 30 wheelchair accessible dwellings built per year (subject to site viability)
	Encourage development of homes that meet Lifetime Homes standard in line with Halton's Core Strategy	As and when planning applications received	HBC Planning	Staff time	Aspirational target of 25% increase in the number of homes built to Lifetime Homes standard (subject to site viability)
	Commission supported housing scheme for single homeless in Widnes	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Revenue implications for housing support service	Development completed by 2014
	Commission 10 bungalows for rent for adults with physical disabilities and learning difficulties	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Council or HCA grant	Development completed by 2014
To review future Gypsy and Traveller	Participate in Cheshire wide Gypsy and Traveller	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and	Staff time Approx £8,000	Identify sufficient site provision to meet assessed need for next five

pitch provision	Accommodation Assessment		Development Services)	contribution to be identified	years New 12 pitch site completed
	Incorporate Gypsy and Traveller provision in Site Allocations Development Plan	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and Development Services)	Staff time	
	Deliver an additional 12 permanent pitches adjacent to existing transit site	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and Development Services)	Staff time HCA funding (£800k)	
To prevent homelessness	Undertake strategic review of homelessness	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	To maintain the number of statutory homeless acceptances to no more than a 10% increase per year of 2011/12 levels (64 acceptances)
	Update Homelessness Strategy	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
	Engage with stakeholders and partners via the Homelessness Forum to minimise the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice	Monitor and develop sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme	Throughout period of Strategy	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Running costs (£125k pa)	Provision of a cost effective, fair and transparent allocations system that promotes choice Percentage of bids within each banding Number of private homes let through system
	Implement the Affordable Housing Policy which includes a proportion of intermediate housing	2013	HBC Planning Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	50% of units delivered through affordable housing policy to be intermediate housing (subject to demand and viability)
	Develop a Marketing Strategy to promote the various types of low cost home ownership products and support Government initiatives such as New Buy	2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Marketing Strategy developed and implemented
	Promote Homes Hub via the	2013	Divisional Manager	Staff time	Link to Homes Hub on the Council's

	Council's website		(Commissioning)		website
To target housing access to supported housing to those who need it most	Reconfigure existing provision of housing for single homeless people	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Improve the quality and fitness for purpose of temporary accommodation for single, homeless people.
	Review existing provision of supported accommodation for households fleeing domestic violence	2013/14	Operational Director (Prevention and Assessment)	Staff time Possible capital and/or revenue funding	Dependent on outcome of review
	Introduce Housing Gateway Support system and undertake effective monitoring of the new system	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Staff costs Annual IT costs	Supported housing services are provided to those in greatest need

Objective 3: To improve housing conditions and make the best use of the housing stock

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate	Implement 10 year action plan	Throughout period of Strategy	HBC Regeneration Team	Staff time	Delivery of at least 350 new (predominantly private) homes by 2023 Provision of a further 150 new affordable homes by 2015/16 Physical enhancement and energy efficiency improvements to 500 retained two storey system built homes by 2016
	Neighbourhood extension of Lakeside and Canalside	2015/16	HBC Regeneration Team	Staff time Other (?)	
	Continue to take strategic leadership role within the Castlefields Regeneration Partnership	Ongoing	HBC Regeneration Team	Staff time	
To explore the implications of private rented sector growth with a view to improving standards in the sector	Implement Private Rented Sector project plan	2013/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time Promotional budget (£5k from Homelessness Prevention fund)	Increase in the number of accredited landlords from 39 to 50 by end of Strategy period Increase the number of accredited properties from 141 to 200 by end of Strategy period Policy position on use of PRS to discharge statutory homelessness duty agreed
	Consider implementing new flexibilities to discharge statutory homelessness duty through private rented sector	2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty	Continued development of Halton Healthy Homes Network	Ongoing	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	Improved SAP ratings in private sector stock from 56 to 60 by time of next Private Sector Stock Condition survey
	Develop new Affordable Warmth Strategy	Ongoing	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	
	Promote Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation	October 2013 – ongoing thereafter	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	
	Develop and implement HECA further report and progress reports	March 2013 – progress reports every two years thereafter	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	

To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock	Support Registered Providers in their implementation of the National Homeswap schemes through promotion on HBC website and CBL systems	2012/13 and ongoing	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Maximise opportunities for underoccupying social tenants to find accommodation more suited to their needs
	Review the Halton Tenancy Strategy	September 2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
	Work with RPs to identify empty properties suitable for lease/acquisition using HCA empty homes funding	2012/13/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	Bring 25 long term empty properties back into use through direct intervention over the Strategy period
	Undertake survey of empty homes to establish what support can be provided by the Council	2013/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time Postage costs (contribution from Homelessness Prevention Fund)	
	Develop a more pro-active approach to bringing empty homes back into use	2013/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time Budget to carry out works in default (?)	
	Establish sub group of Housing Partnership to explore opportunities	June 2013	Director of Public Health	Staff time	Sub group established
	Develop an action plan for joint working and adopting principles of Making Every Contact Count	September 2013	Director of Public Health	Staff time	Action Plan developed